

**Abstract of the Honor Council**  
**Case 55, Spring 2016**  
**September 18, 2016**

**Members Present:**

Katie Jensen (presiding), Natalie Swanson (clerk), Sofia Yi, Dessy Akinfenwa, Richard Bui, Stefano Romano

**Ombuds:** Aaron Shaw

**Letter of Accusation:**

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A, Student B, Student C, and Student D of giving and receiving unauthorized aid on a final exam in an upper level computer science course. The Chair read the Letter of Accusation aloud in full.

**Evidence Submitted:**

- Letter of Accusation
- Letter of Accusation - addendum
- Student A's written statement
- Student B's written statement
- Student C's written statement
- Student D's written statement
- Student A's final exam
- Student B's final exam
- Student C's final exam
- Student D's final exam
- Final exam instructions
- Final exam problem statements
- Lab 2
- Lab 3
- Practice final exam
- Practice final exam solutions
- Textbook pages
- Student A's email chain
- Student A's piazza post
- 9 Sample final exams
- Exam sign in/sign out sheet
- Syllabus

**Plea:**

Student A pled "not in violation."

Student B pled "not in violation."

Student C pled "not in violation."

Student D pled “not in violation.”

**Testimony:**

Student A:

Student A stated that he left Houston two days before the exam was released. He emailed the professor beforehand to ask for an electronic copy. According to the student, professor gave him an electronic copy a day after the exam was released, so the student took the exam independently and electronically, within the rules of the exams – with notes and his book. He turned a hard copy of his exam in after arriving back in Houston.

Student A stated that he and the other accused students all worked and studied together before he received and worked on the exam. They prepared a sheet of notes together – each student was responsible for preparing different sections of the note sheet, so each student had a different “specialty.” They taught each other their respective sections and then traded notebooks. Student A said that their notes would likely be similar in terms of wording.

He brought out his notes as evidence for the Council to examine as he explained how he derived problems on his exam. He referenced using his own notes, lab handouts, book notes, and the compiled note sheet the group of accused students had worked on together on specific questions throughout the exam.

Student A stated that he did not give the exam to the other accused students and did not contact them about the exam. He stated that he did not share his lab 3 source code with the other accused students.

Student A stated that he met with Student B after he turned in his exam to discuss another project.

In closing, Student A stated that he took it remotely, electronically, within four hours, without internet, and without talking to other students during the time period. He stated that he used allowable resources for the exam.

Student B:

Student B started by explaining the compiled notes sheet and how the accused students divided the sections of material between them. According to the accused student, the professor had stated that students could use their own notes, book notes, and notes compiled from any source prior to the exam. According to Student B, the accused students assumed that they could collaborate to make a compiled notes sheet together before the exam. He stated that they compiled their notes before Student A left Houston, primarily as a teaching exercise.

The student used a Google Timeline map to show where he had been. He pointed to his location at Duncan Hall at 10:30-10:37 a.m. on May 4<sup>th</sup> as his drop off time.

Student B showed Councilmembers his notes as evidence of materials he could use and pointed to specific parts of his notes he had used to answer questions. His compiled notes were identical to Student A's compiled notes in many ways. For question 2, he stated that crossing out notes on his exam were the result of a common mistake that he later noticed. When Student B found errors in other student's notes in the compiled notes, he made his own corrections on the exam.

He also noted parts of the compiled notes that were not directly useful to the exam.

Student B stated that he did not take or receive answers from Student A's exam. He met with Student A after they had both completed the exam to work on a project for a different class.

He stated that he changed variable names in question 5 from the compiled notes to avoid obvious similarities. He stated that he did not have access to student A's lab 3 source code. He did not acknowledge any similarities between lab 3 code and question five.

In closing, Student B stated that the accused students divided topics evenly among them. The day before Student A left, they copied each other's notes to study. After that, the accused students did not communicate during the exam period. Student A met with Student B to work on a different project after the exam.

Student C:

Student C used a Google Timeline map to show that he did not go to Duncan Hall the day that Student A turned in his exam (May 3<sup>rd</sup>).

He stated to book pages that were relevant to the exam. He noted that the professor had indicated that lab 3 concepts might be useful on the exam, so the accused students made sure to study the material before the exam.

Student C stated that all of the accused students used knowledge from the midterm and study questions provided by the professor to prepare for the exam. They compiled a set of notes based on the practice exam. He said that this was permissible based on a statement made by the professor on a Piazza post, which was not provided to the council.

Student C stated that he did not take or receive Student A's exam. He stated that he did not have access to Student A's lab 3 source code. He stated that they did not have any contact during the exam period.

His compiled notes were similar to the other accused students' compiled notes.

In closing, Student C stated that similarities from the exam stem from similarities in the accused students' compiled notes.

Student D:

Student D opened by explaining the format of their study group. He stated that all of the accused students understood their compiled notes to be permissible given the restrictions for the exam. According to the accused student, the professor had stated that students could use notes compiled from any source prior to the exam.

Student D was responsible for the material that was relevant to question 2 on the exam. He noted that some of the material that was not relevant to their exam in their compiled notes.

Student D provided his notes for viewing. These compiled notes were similar to the compiled notes of all other students. He accounted the incompleteness of his exam to being in a rush.

According to Student D, the accused students made a list of topics and divided them up, taught, and shared notes after taking the practice exam. They shared their notes between them before Student A left Houston.

Student D stated that he did not take or receive the exam from any of the other accused students. He stated that he did not have access to Student A's lab 3 source code.

He stated that there was no communication between himself and Student A or any other accused students during the examination period.

In closing, Student D reiterated how the accused students had studied together, and then after the students started their exams they ceased communication.

**Verdict Deliberations:**

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because the instructions of the exam say that students must use their own notes. The students used notes that were not their own given the amount of collaboration that occurred as they copied them verbatim. Furthermore, the questions on the exam show word-for-word similarities.

Vote #1: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that a violation occurred?

Yes: 6  
No: 0  
Abstentions: 0

The Council then discussed whether or not Student A, Student B, Student C and Student D committed the violation. All four accused students were equally involved in the compiled note taking, which directly violated the honor code policy provided for the exam.

Vote #2: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student A is “In Violation?”

Yes: 6  
No: 0  
Abstentions: 0

Vote #3: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student B is “In Violation?”

Yes: 6  
No: 0  
Abstentions: 0

Vote #4: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student C is “In Violation?”

Yes: 0  
No: 0  
Abstentions: 0

Vote #5: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student D is “In Violation?”

Yes: 6  
No: 0  
Abstentions: 0

### **Penalty Deliberations:**

Council members opened by discussing mitigating circumstances. Councilmembers saw no reason to mitigate or aggravate. The exam was worth 25% of the course grade, which corresponds to an F in the course given the Honor Council’s Consensus Penalty Structure. Student’s A and D had both been found in violation of the Honor Code before, and therefore they both received more stringent penalties of an F in the course and 2 semester suspension.

Vote #6: What is the appropriate penalty for Student A?

F in the course and 3 semesters of suspension: 0  
F in the course and 2 semesters of suspension: 6  
F in the course and 1 semester of suspension: 0  
F in the course: 0  
3 letter grade reduction: 0  
2 letter grade reduction: 0  
1 letter grade reduction: 0  
2/3 letter grade reduction: 0  
1/3 letter grade reduction: 0  
Letter of Reprimand: 0  
Abstentions: 0

Vote #7: What is the appropriate penalty for Student B?

F in the course and 3 semesters of suspension:	0
F in the course and 2 semesters of suspension:	0
F in the course and 1 semester of suspension:	0
F in the course:	6
3 letter grade reduction:	0
2 letter grade reduction:	0
1 letter grade reduction:	0
2/3 letter grade reduction	0
1/3 letter grade reduction	0
Letter of Reprimand	0
Abstentions:	0

Vote #8: What is the appropriate penalty for Student C?

F in the course and 3 semesters of suspension:	0
F in the course and 2 semesters of suspension:	0
F in the course and 1 semester of suspension:	0
F in the course:	6
3 letter grade reduction:	0
2 letter grade reduction:	0
1 letter grade reduction:	0
2/3 letter grade reduction	0
1/3 letter grade reduction	0
Letter of Reprimand	0
Abstentions:	0

Vote #9: What is the appropriate penalty for Student D?

F in the course and 3 semesters of suspension:	0
F in the course and 2 semesters of suspension:	6
F in the course and 1 semester of suspension:	0
F in the course:	0
3 letter grade reduction:	0
2 letter grade reduction:	0
1 letter grade reduction:	0
2/3 letter grade reduction	0
1/3 letter grade reduction	0
Letter of Reprimand	0
Abstentions:	0

**Decision:**

The Honor Council thus finds Student A “In Violation” of the Honor Code and recommends that he receive an F in the course and 2 semester suspension. A Prior Violation Flag is also attached to his record.

The Honor Council thus finds Student B “In Violation” of the Honor Code and recommends that he receive an F in the course. A Prior Violation Flag is also attached to his record.

The Honor Council thus finds Student C “In Violation” of the Honor Code and recommends that he receive an F in the course. A Prior Violation Flag is also attached to his record.

The Honor Council thus finds Student D “In Violation” of the Honor Code and recommends that he receive an F in the course and 2 semester suspension. A Prior Violation Flag is also attached to his record.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 2 hours 30 minutes

Respectfully submitted,  
Natalie Swanson  
Clerk